

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks to United States Troops at Fort Lee, Virginia
September 28, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, Fort Lee! Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. Thank you.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. Thank you! Thank you! I want to thank your outstanding leadership team for welcoming me, including Major General Darrell Williams, Lieutenant General Wendy Masiello, Colonel Adam Butler, and Command Sergeant Major Nathaniel Bartee.

I know this is the proud home of the Army Combined Arms Support Command. But I know we've got other services represented here. Navy. *[Applause]* Marines. *[Applause]* Air Force. *[Applause]* We've got our outstanding DOD civilians in the house. And then, of course, we've got a whole lot of Army. *[Applause]*

Now, I'm not here to give a big speech.

Audience member. *[Inaudible]*

The President. No, no. *[Laughter]* The main thing I wanted to do was just come by, shake some hands. As you know, I had a town hall with CNN and some of our extraordinary troops, our veterans, our military families. We had an important discussion about how our Nation has to uphold its obligations to you and your families. You serve us with such distinction every single day, I want to make sure we're doing right by you. And so you can watch it tonight on CNN or you can watch whatever else is on. *[Laughter]*

But you guys showed extraordinary hospitality and made our visit a success, so I just want to say thank you.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. You know, here at this post, you are part of a tradition of service that stretches back nearly a hundred years. Doughboys marched off to World War I from this facility. You trained our soldiers for World War II, Korea, Vietnam, every conflict since. So as you prepare to celebrate your centennial next year, I'm just going to jump the gun and go ahead and say, Fort Lee, happy 100th birthday.

And this is also a chance for me to pay tribute to the vital work that you're doing every single day. You don't always get the glory, but the fact is, America's Army and America's military could not project around the world, would not be the very best in the world if it were not for the best sustainment personnel in the world. There's an old saying, "Amateurs talk about tactics, professionals talk about logistics."

So today we salute all the logistics personnel. You make sure our troops get what they need: the right amount and the right place at the right time. We salute the Transportation Corps, keeping our supply lines open and, at times, risking your lives doing it. We salute the folks who handle the ordnance, a line of work where you need some steady hands—don't drop nothing. *[Laughter]* We salute all the quartermasters, including our Army cooks. I know sometimes military food gets a bad rap, but here at Fort Lee, the cooks train to be world class. Some are so good—like Army Staff Sergeant Justin Gonzalez and Navy Master Chief Derrick

Davenport—that we made them part of the Presidential Food Service. And you know we've got good food in the White House. *[Laughter]* And that's because we've got outstanding talent that's been trained here.

And this brings me to the main message I want to deliver. I've now served as your President for almost 8 years. And it gets me and Michelle reflecting on some of the unforgettable moments that we've experienced. And we've done a lot of amazing stuff, but I will tell you that of all the privileges of this office, there's been no greater privilege, no greater honor than serving as the Commander in Chief of the finest military in the history of the world.

And what makes you best, it's not just the incredible platforms that give us our military superiority, although we've got some pretty impressive equipment on display right here. It's not the sophisticated technologies that make us the most advanced military. We have the strongest military because we've got the best people. Because of your spirit, because of your character, because of your patriotism. So you inspire me and Michelle and the American people. And not just as Commander in Chief, but as an American citizen, I just want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for the great work you do.

Thanks for your patriotism. Many of you had a lot of options, and you chose a career that's not always the most comfortable, certainly is not always the most lucrative. But you've dedicated yourself to something bigger than yourself. You chose a life of service. You stepped forward. You volunteered, and most of you volunteered in a time of war. You raised your hand, and you took an oath to defend and protect the country that you love.

And so I want to thank you for your devotion. In these 15 years since 9/11, our Nation has asked a lot of this generation. Among you are proud veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq. Many of you have served multiple tours. You've done your duty, again and again. You've helped deal deadly blows to those who would threaten us. You've helped prevent attacks and threats to our homeland. You're helping us to destroy ISIL, and we will destroy them. You're keeping us safe. You've earned your place among the greatest of generations.

Now, I believe that America's commitment now to our troops and our veterans is a sacred covenant that we have to keep. There's no more solemn request than to ask somebody to risk their lives on your behalf. And if they do that, that's a covenant. Both sides have responsibilities. You took an oath to defend us; the rest of us need to fulfill our oath to take care of you and your families—especially our Gold Star families—and that means using our military wisely. It means not rushing into war, but doing what's necessary to keep us safe. It means not playing politics with war. It means giving you the resources and the support that you need to succeed. It means when you come home, you and your families are getting the education and the benefits that you have earned.

So we've got obligations to you. And this is not just a job for government. As you know, Michelle and Dr. Jill Biden have done a great job with Joining Forces to make sure that everybody is doing something to support our veterans and our military families. And that's something that Michelle and I, we've pledged we're going to continue even after we leave office.

And finally, I want to thank you for setting a good example for everybody else. Sometimes, especially during election season, the country seems divided. But the truth of the matter is, when you look out at this group of members of our military, but it's true on every base around the world, you're unified in your mission. You do your job. You look out for each other. You lift each other up. You leave nobody behind. And you remind us, we're one team, and we're one

people, and we're one Nation, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. That's what you stand for. So thank you for your sacrifice, but also thank you for reminding the rest of the country what patriotism really means.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:12 p.m. in the Hi-Bay at the Air Force Transportation Management School. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Darrell K. Williams, USA, commanding general, and CSM Nathaniel J. Bartee, Sr., USA, command sergeant major, Combined Arms Support Command; Lt. Gen. Wendy M. Masiello, USAF, director, Defense Contract Management Agency; Col. Adam W. Butler, USA, commander, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Lee; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Fort Lee, VA.

Locations: Fort Lee, VA.

Names: Bartee, Nathaniel J., Sr.; Biden, Jill T.; Butler, Adam W.; Davenport, Derrick; Gonzalez, Justin; Masiello, Wendy M.; Obama, Michelle; Williams, Darrell K.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Armed Forces, U.S.: Servicemembers :: Meetings with President; Army, Department of the : Fort Lee; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Terrorism : September 11, 2001, attacks; Veterans : Benefits; Virginia : Fort Lee; Virginia : President's visits.

DCPD Number: DCPD201600638.